

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SSM-03
NEAE-00 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /087 W
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O 191619Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 721
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
C/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3806
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 896

DUBLIN PASS TO CODEL ZABLOCKI; JERUSALEM PASS TO
SECRETARY PARTY

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS EG XF
SUBJ: ISRAEL STUNNED, ANGRY AT RECALL OF EGYPTIAN DELEGATION

1. SUMMARY: SADAT'S SURPRISE RECALL OF THE EGYPTIAN DELE-
GATION, DESPITE GENERALLY UPBEAT PRESS AND TV STATEMENTS BY
ALL KEY PARTICIPANTS, SHOCKED AND ANGERED THIS COUNTRY,
WHERE EMOTIONS AND ANXIETIES CONTINUE TO BE STORM-TOSSED
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BETWEEN HOPES OF SUCCESS AND FEARS OF BEING OUT-MANEUVERED.
THE MOVE WAS WIDELY RESENTED, BUT VIEWED PRINCIPALLY AS A
TACTICAL ONE, PARTLY TO ENLIST US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL AND
PARTLY TO SHORE UP SADAT'S CREDIBILITY AT HOME AND IN OTHER
ARAB COUNTRIES. IN THE EYES OF MOST ISRAELIS, SADAT'S "EMO-
TIONAL" REACTION AND UNPREDICTABILITY FULLY JUSTIFIED BEGIN'S
TOUGHNESS. END SUMMARY

2. THE MORNING AFTER SADAT'S LATEST BOMBSHELL SOME OBSERVERS ARE SPECULATING THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN PRE-PLANNED WITHOUT REFERENCE TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING AT THE NEGOTIATING SESSIONS. THEY SUGGEST THAT SADAT HAD DECIDED ON THIS TACTIC EVEN BEFORE HIS DELEGATION ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM. ALTHOUGH THE PRESS NOTES THE REASONS FOR THE RECALL AS BROADCAST FROM CAIRO AND OFFERED BY EGYPTIAN DELEGATES (ISRAELI DELAYS, DIVERSIONS, HAGGLING OVER PROCEDURES AND ALREADY CONCEDED POINTS, AND BEGIN'S DINNER TOAST OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT), COMMENTATORS ARE UNCONVINCED THAT THESE WERE THE REAL REASONS. ALL NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THE SURPRISE OF THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION AS WELL AS THAT OF OF THE US AND ISRAELI DELEGATIONS WHEN THE NEWS BROKE. IN FACT, SADAT'S TIMING IS SEEN AS FAULTY AND IRRATIONAL AND LIKELY TO DEFEAT HIS OWN PURPOSE. UP UNTIL THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RECALL ON CAIRO RADIO, HEARD HERE AT 1950, NEWSMEN HAD BEEN TOLD BY OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN OF THE PROGRESS IN THE TALKS AND OF A PREVAILING UPBEAT ATMOSPHERE. THE EFFECT OF THE RECALL WAS THEREFORE ALL THE MORE STUNNING.

3. IN THE HILTON LOBBY LAST NIGHT, ISRAELI NEWSMEN WERE CALLING SADAT'S MOVE ANOTHER PLAY IN "EGYPT'S WAR OF NERVES." HARDLY ANYONE, EVEN AMONG THE FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, DIRECTED CRITICISM AGAINST THE GOI. ONLY ONE OR TWO SUGGESTED THAT SADAT HAS A VERY LIMITED TIME-FRAME AND MUST SHOW RESULTS QUICKLY. ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WERE INCREDULOUS: "BREAKING OFF, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AFTER LESS THAN TWO DAYS?" THEY ASKED RHETORICALLY. MANY SPECULATED ON THE NEXT STEP. ANOTHER BOMBSHELL IS EXPECTED ON SATURDAY (JAN 21) WHEN SADAT WILL ADDRESS THE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY. PREDICTIONS FROM OBSERVERS IN THE LOBBY RANGED FROM "SADAT WILL RESIGN" TO "THERE WILL BE A CARTER-BEGIN-SADAT SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON." SOME SAW RIYADH BEHIND THE DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENT AND EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT SADAT IS RETREATING FROM HIS PEACE INITIATIVE UNDER SAUDI PRESSURE AS WELL AS THAT OF THE REJECTIONISTS -- AN ANALYSIS ALSO FOUND HERE AND THERE IN TODAY'S PRESS. HOWEVER, BY MORNING A MORE SOBER VIEW PREVAILED THAT THE MOVE WAS TACTICAL, THAT NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN MERELY ADJOURNED, NOT BROKEN OFF, AND THAT THANKS TO THE US GOOD OFFICES THEY WOULD SOON BE PUT BACK ON THE TRACKS AGAIN. THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WEIZMAN'S INVITATION TO GO TO CAIRO TO RESUME THE MILITARY DISCUSSIONS STILL STANDS AND VANCE'S ON-SCHEDULE MEETING WITH SADAT ON FRIDAY (JAN 20) REINFORCES THIS BELIEF.

4. THE RECALL WAS REGARDED BY MOST AS A TRANSPARENT EFFORT TO GENERATE US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL AND A FEW EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT SADAT HAD OVERPLAYED HIS HAND. THERE WAS ALSO SOME SPECULATION THAT SADAT MAY BE SEEKING TO UNDERMINE BEGIN

WITH HIS MANEUVERS IN THE HOPE OF THEREBY STRENGTHENING WHAT HE CONSIDERS A POTENTIALLY MORE FLEXIBLE WEIZMAN-DAYAN-YADIN TEAM. HOWEVER, THOSE WHO SPECULATE THAT THIS MAY BE SADAT'S INTENT ALSO COMMENT ON THE TOTAL UNLIKELINESS OF SUCH A POSSIBILITY. AN END OF NEGOTIATIONS AT THIS EARLY STAGE WOULD SERVE ONLY TO REINFORCE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN BEGIN'S HARDLINE.

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TM THE PRESS TODAY REFLECTS WIDESPREAD RESENTMENT.
EDITORIAL OPINION IS UNANIMOUS IN CRITICIZING SADAT AND MOST
PAPERS ARE URGING ISRAEL TO REMAIN FIRM. THE HISTADRUT'S
DAVAR IS A REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE; "DOES PRESIDENT SADAT
HOPE TO TURN THE PUBLIC AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT? IF SO, HE

IS MAKING A MISTAKE. EVEN THOSE WHO ARE NOT WHOLEHEARTEDLY
IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION TO RAISE
THE THREE NOES AT THE OFFICIAL HILTON DINNER WILL HAVE TO
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ADMIT THAT THE NOES HAVE BROAD NATIONAL SUPPORT." ALTHOUGH
OPINION AS TO THE EFFECT OF SADAT'S RECALL ON THE PEACE
PROCESS IS STILL TENTATIVE AND SOMEWHAT FUZZY, ONE VIEW IS
THAT SADAT'S CREDIBILITY HAS SUFFERED. HE IS BEGINNING TO
TAKE ON THE APPEARANCE HERE OF AN IMPULSIVE AND UNPREDICTABLE
LEADER. NEGOTIATIONS WERE JUST GETTING UNDERWAY AND NO
SINGLE ISSUE IS NOW SEEN AS JUSTIFYING HIS DRAMATIC MOVE.
BEGIN IS EXPECTED TO HAVE ACROSS-THE-BOARD SUPPORT IN
THE KNESSET AND AMONG THE PUBLIC IN POSING AS THE AGGRIEVED
PARTY. FOR THE MOMENT, THE CONTROVERSY AMONG ISRAELIS
OVER SETTLEMENTS, BEGIN'S WEST BANK PLAN AND HIS HANDLING
OF NEGOTIATIONS HAVE TAKEN A BACK SEAT TO SERIOUS CONCERN
THAT THE SITUATION MAY REVERT TO WHAT IT WAS BSV (BEFORE
SADAT'S VISIT).

6. OPINIONS FROM A RANDOM SELECTION OF EMBASSY CONTACTS:

--- HERUT MK YORAM ARIDOR SAW NO REASON FOR SADAT'S ACTION
EXCEPT TO SPRPRISE. THE LIKUD IS UNITED BEHIND BEGIN ON THIS
MATTER. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE TALKS HAVE BEEN BROKEN OFF.

--- LIBERAL MK GUSTAV BADIAN SAID THAT FOLLOWING LAST SUNDAY'S
UNCERTAINTY OVER THE DELEGATION'S ARRIVAL, HE WAS NOT SUR-
PRISED AT ITS RECALL. HE HOPED THE US COULD PUT THINGS BACK
ON TRACK. SADAT'S IMPULSIVENESS HAD BOTH POSITIVE (HIS JERUSALEM
VISIT) AND DESTRUCTIVE (THE RECALL) ASPECTS, WITH THE LATTER
JUSTIFYING ISRAEL'S DISTRUST. HE FEELS BEGIN HAS STRONG
GENERAL AND KNESSET SUPPORT EVEN BEYOND THE
GOVERNMENT COALITION.

--- HISTADRUT SECGEN YORUHAM MESHEL WAS OF THE OPINION
THAT EVERYTHING MUST BE DONE TO GET NEGOTIATIONS
RESUMED. THEIR COLLAPSE WOULD BE VERY SERIOUS AND MESHEL
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FEARS THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR COLLAPSE ON THE SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL STABILITY OF BOTH COUNTRIES. HE WAS CRITICAL OF
BOTH SADAT AND BEGIN FOR CONDUCTING NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH A
RATHER STERILE PUBLIC DIALOGUE. LEWIS

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